



JON SHAIN

ORDINARY CATS

Produced by Jon Shain and FJ Ventre

Flyin' Records (FR009)

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Over the years, Jon Shain has developed and refined his own contemporary version of the Piedmont Blues, a bouncy, energetic style that developed in Shain's adopted hometown of Durham, NC and elsewhere around the region. "I'd done several albums in a row that really sound like my live group: heavy on the harmonica, heavy on the dobro, and with a sound that is identifiably folk-blues," Shain says. "I knew I wanted to do something different this time."

On **Ordinary Cats**, his eighth solo album, Shain doesn't abandon that sensibility completely, but he does plug it in and crank it up. "I knew I would be playing some electric guitar on this record," he says. "I haven't put a lot of electric guitar on my albums. I've played it on other people's albums more than my own." The result is a modern revisiting of the roots-rock (what some now call Americana) sound associated with Stephen Stills and Neil Young, at times. But there is still a generous amount of fingerpicked acoustic guitar from Shain, a former International Blues Challenge finalist in the solo/duo category.

Shain's longtime musical collaborator, FJ Ventre, co-produced and engineered **Ordinary Cats**, as well as playing bass and providing backing vocals. Other major contributors to the album include Chris Stamey of the dB's, who mixed the album, and Greg Humphreys on harmony vocals, currently making a name for himself as a solo artist after years fronting the NC bands Hobex and Dillon Fence. Pete Connolly, of the NC indie band Birds and Arrows, contributed drums to several tracks as well.

- 1. ORDINARY CATS** (4:38) This poetic image-driven folk-rock song about where we find ourselves—and how we got here—sets the tone for the album.
- 2. CUT OUT BIN** (3:54) A guitar-driven, organ-saturated anthem—a tribute to record stores and '70s rock. Rising star Lizzy Ross turns the song into a memorable duet with her sweetly off-kilter vocals. The "single" for Americana/AAA stations.
- 3. LEVEL IT OUT** (3:06) Layers of acoustic guitars and mandolin make a nuanced bed for this call for moderation. Hard-fought Buddhist-leaning folk wisdom here.
- 4. SOLDIERS PAY** (4:31) A stirring first-person anti-war folk ballad, acoustic guitars and mandolins. Which war does it describe?
- 5. SOLDIERS REEL** (1:36) An original string-band instrumental to piggy-back with Soldiers Pay.
- 6. STATION MASTER** (4:39) Acoustic guitar and piano duel it out over a story of drinking and the stumble towards redemption in this modern Piedmont blues number.
- 7. SARAH FROST** (4:29) Folk-rock riffs recall Stephen Stills's jagged sound in this haunting tale of sickness at home and life on the road.
- 8. IF YOU EVER FLEW AWAY** (4:24) A solo slide-guitar blues with wistful lyrics and avian imagery. Good for blues show programming.
- 9. DECOMPRESSION** (3:48) This dark, moody rocker sounds like Neil Young-meets-Richard Thompson while grappling with issues of solitude and disassociation.
- 10. YOU CANNOT HIDE YOUR HEART FROM THE BAND** (4:01) Pedal steel perfectly complements the vocal in this Americana ballad about growing older in the music business.
- 11. LUCKIER THAN MOST** (4:18) A fingerpicked acoustic reflection on the state of our environment.
- 12. A DRAM LEST WE GET DRY** (2:28) Solo slide guitar sets the tone in this rousing album-ending stomper about drinking and fighting!

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